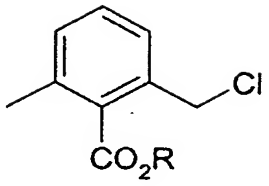
What is claimed is:

1. A compound of formula (I)



(I)

wherein:

R is selected from the group consisting of H, C_1-C_{12}-alkyl, C_3-C_8-cycloalkyl, C_6-C_{12}-aryl, C_1-C_4-alkyl-C_6-C_{12}-aryl and C_5-C_{10}-heteroaryl, wherein, in the alkyl and cycloalkyl groups, one or more CH_2 groups may be replaced by -O-, and each of the alkyl, cycloalkyl and aryl groups may be independently substituted with halogen.

2. A compound of formula (I) as claimed in claim 1 in which

R is selected from the group consisting of C_1-C_8 alkyl, C_3-C_6-cycloalkyl and C_1-C_4-alkyl-C_6-C_{12}-aryl, each of which may optionally be independently substituted with halogen and in which one or two CH_2 groups may be replaced by -O-.

3. A compound of formula (I) as claimed in claim 1 in which

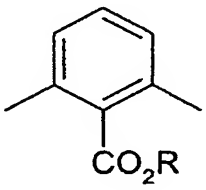
R is C_1-C_6 alkyl or C_1-C_4-alkyl-C_6-C_{12}-aryl, each of which may optionally be independently substituted with halogen and in which one CH_2 group may be replaced by -O-.

4. A compound of formula (I) as claimed in claim 1 in which

R is methyl, ethyl, propyl, i-propyl, t-butyl, phenyl, 2-methoxyethyl or benzyl.

5. A process for preparing a compound of formula (I) as claimed in claim 1, which comprises

reacting a dimethylbenzoic ester of formula (II)

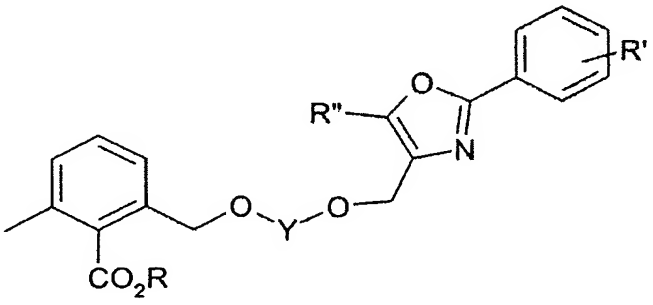


(II)

where R is as defined in claim 1 above

with a chlorinating reagent, optionally in an inert solvent, at a temperature above 40°C and subsequently optionally purifying.

6. A process for preparing a compound of formula (C)



(C)

in which

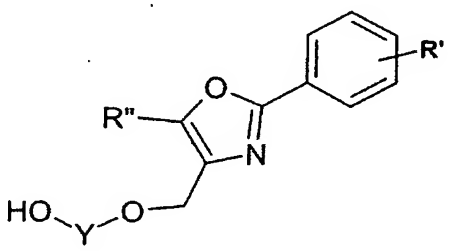
R is selected from the group consisting of H, C_1-C_{12}-alkyl, C_3-C_8-cycloalkyl, C_6-C_{12}-aryl, C_1-C_4-alkyl-C_6-C_{12}-aryl and C_5-C_{10}-heteroaryl and, wherein, in the alkyl and cycloalkyl groups, one or more CH_2 groups may be replaced by –O- and the alkyl, cycloakyl and aryl groups may be independently substituted by halogen,

Y is $-(CH_2)_3-$, 1,3-phenylene, or 1,3-cyclohexanediyl,

R' is selected from H, F, Br, CF_3, $(C_1$-$C_6)$-alkyl, O-$(C_1$-$C_6)$-alkyl, and phenyl;

R'' is selected from H, $(C_1$-$C_6)$-alkyl, $(C_1$-$C_3)$-alkylphenyl, $(C_5$-$C_6)$-cycloalkyl, phenyl, and CF_3;

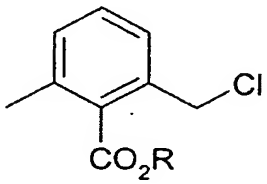
which comprises reacting compounds of the formula (C1)



(C1)

where Y, R' and R'' are each as defined above in this claim

with compounds of the formula (I)



(I)

where R is as defined above in this claim

in toluene, NMP or other aprotic solvents, in the presence of a suitable base, at a temperature in the range of -78 to +50°C, and subsequently working up extractively and optionally crystallizing the end product.

7. The process for preparing the compounds of formula (C) as claimed in claim 6, wherein the phenyl ring is substituted by R' in the m- or p-position.

8. The use of a compound of formula (I) as claimed in claim 1 for preparing PPAR agonists of the general formula (C).